

## **Canada pushes coal phase-out at climate talks; Summit in Germany comes as Ottawa faces pressure to be more aggressive in lowering emissions**

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### **Body**

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Environment Minister Catherine McKenna is touting Canadian leadership before she heads to Germany for the latest round of talks on the Paris climate change agreement, where she is expected to urge other countries to phase out their reliance on coal-fired energy.

McKenna told the Star she and her British counterpart will launch a joint campaign Thursday calling for other countries to declare a plan not to build any more coal-fired plants and to eliminate existing ones.

The plan will include more countries and businesses signing on to the alliance, which among other things will aim to help developing countries move from coal to cleaner energy sources such as wind and solar, McKenna said.

"We know that coal is not the energy source of the future," she said. "People can see there are very tangible things we are doing, and I think it's also important to show Canada's leadership."

The annual United Nations COP climate change conference began in Bonn, Germany, last Monday.

Delegates from around the world are meeting to discuss the Paris agreement, which was struck two years ago and includes pledges from more than 190 countries to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change to keep global warming under two degrees Celsius by 2100.

McKenna said Canada will highlight the "concrete" actions it has taken to reduce emissions, including Ottawa's plan to impose carbon pricing on provinces that don't already have a tax or a cap-and-trade program, as well as the planned phase-out of coal-fired energy by 2030.

But environmental advocates say it's time for Canada to do more, especially as it prepares to take over the rotating presidency of the Group of 7 next year.

"Most of the policies that we have on the table, we could increase the stringency," said Erin Flanagan, policy director at the Pembina Institute.

Flanagan said this round of climate talks is critical in part because negotiators are writing the rule book for how the Paris agreement - which comes into effect in 2020 - will be implemented.

Countries are also tasked during this round of talks with establishing the framework for next year's (Conference of the Parties) COP talks, when Flanagan said countries will debate whether their emissions targets under the agreement are strong enough.

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After coming to power in 2015, the Liberal government kept the emissions targets that were widely lambasted as too lax under the previous Conservative administration: 30 per cent below the 2005 level by 2030.

Flanagan and others said they hope Canada will indicate a willingness to ratchet up that goal, even as some observers, such as the secretary general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, believe the country is on pace to fall short of its current targets.

"We have a lot to brag about internationally, and so I think we're in a position to really lead those discussions, and I hope that our delegation this time around will take that opportunity," Flanagan said.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May was more blunt.

"Can Canada claim to have leadership with such weak targets? No," she told the Star. "There's going to be a huge amount of pressure on countries like Canada to start sending the signals that we know our targets are too weak."

McKenna said she recognizes "we all need to be doing more" to ensure the Paris agreement is successful, but she stopped short of any indication Canada will implement a tougher emissions target.

Another underlying political current of the climate talks in Bonn involves how much money industrialized countries such as Canada are pledging to give to developing countries to help them wean off greenhouse gas emissions and use clean energy.

Countries under the Paris agreement have committed to establishing a fund worth \$100 billion per year by 2020 for this purpose.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of the Climate Action Network, said Canada's commitment of \$2.65 billion over five years, which was announced in 2015, is a "really great start," but there is pressure on Ottawa to contribute more.

Flanagan added that this may be the "most divisive" element of the talks this year, because the Pacific island state of Fiji - one of the countries most threatened by climate change - holds the COP presidency.

Dale Marshall, national program manager of Environmental Defence, said Canada's "fair share" for the fund is considered by climate activists to be about \$4 billion per year, and pointed out that the current commitment includes only \$800 million in 2020.

McKenna said she's "proud" of the money Canada has contributed, and that she's focused on bringing private sector money into the fund by highlighting, for example, investment opportunities in clean energy.

"This is just about, how do you leverage the private sector to support the movement to clean growth," she said.

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